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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: RETHINKING U.S. FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE: VIEW
FROM POLAND

REF: A. USNATO 329
[B](#). BERLIN 935
[C](#). WARSAW 360

Classified By: Ambassador Victor Ashe for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: Embassy Warsaw believes there would be a strong, negative Polish reaction to major U.S. force reductions in Europe. From Poland,s perspective, a big drawdown would be seen as evidence that the U.S. is less committed to European security at a time of heightened concern over the intentions of a resurgent Russia. Polish officials have emphasized the need for NATO to bolster its military capabilities to avoid becoming a political club more than a military alliance. They are adamant about revising NATO,s Strategic Concept to restore the balance between external missions and territorial defense; they will strongly protest a reduction in the resources needed for that defense. The Poles tell us that it would be hard to justify continued sacrifices in missions like ISAF if cooperation with the Alliance is a one-way street, and the U.S. and other Allies do not take Polish security concerns into account. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) The Poles believe they have an implicit understanding with the United States and the Alliance: they will take active part in missions far from their borders, particularly in Afghanistan, provided that the Alliance makes adequate provisions for the defense of Poland,s borders. Poland is ISAF,s seventh leading troop contributor, fighting without caveats in Southern Afghanistan, and Foreign Minister Sikorski told us recently that he is pressing Prime Minister Tusk to approve another troop increase, from 2,000 to 3,000 soldiers. Some analysts have told us (Ref C) that the greatest threat to Polish resolve in Afghanistan would not be increased casualties, but a failure by the Alliance to address Poland,s concerns about Europe,s territorial defense. Poland would see U.S. troop cuts as compounding shortfalls in the resources and political will needed to defend Europe.

[1](#)3. (S) Unlike the previous Polish government, the Tusk government is not reflexively Russophobic, but Polish officials remain concerned about a resurgent Russia. The GoP took the lead in marshalling an EU reaction to Russia,s invasion of Georgia, and faulted the U.S., among others, for doing too little, too late. In a speech at the Atlantic Council last year, the Foreign Minister launched the &Sikorski doctrine8: the West must respond adequately the next time Russia tries to change Europe,s borders by force.

14. (S) Foreign Minister Sikorski has told U.S. leaders emphatically that NATO risks becoming a political club more than a military alliance) he believes it needs to change the politically correct threat assessments (particularly those concerning Russia), and put in place substantial contingency planning and exercises. During bilateral talks with the U.S. on Missile Defense, the Poles implied that the Alliance,s Article V guarantees may not be dependable, and pressed for bilateral U.S. security guarantees. As NATO launches the process of revising NATO,s Strategic Concept, the Poles are pushing hard to restore balance between out-of-area operations and territorial defense. Polish officials have hinted at how strong the reaction would be if their concerns are not addressed in the new Strategic Concept; the reaction would doubtless be even stronger if they perceived strategic guidance as undercut by U.S. force reductions.

15. (S) Poland would see significant U.S. force reductions in Europe as the latest in a series of disappointments with the U.S.: in their view, the U.S. failed to deliver promised Iraqi contracts, to bring a loyal Ally into the Visa Waiver Program, and most recently, to appoint an appropriately high-level presidential delegation to the September 1 commemoration in Gdansk of the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. Many Poles see this as part of a broader regional trend, a downgrading of U.S. interest in Central and Eastern Europe. Three Polish statesmen, Lech Walesa, Aleksander Kwasniewski and Adam Daniel Rotfeld, were among the signatories of the July letter from Central European leaders to President Obama. The letter warned that the region,s stability and Atlanticist outlook cannot be taken for granted in the face of allegedly waning U.S. engagement.

ASHE